Some MISTAKEN SCRIPTVRES Sincerely explained.

In an anſwer to one infected with ſome Pelagian Errours.

VVritten by *Benjamin Cox* when he was firſt Priſoner in *Coventrie*. Now publiſhed by the Author for the clearing of the truth.

1 Cor. 2. 14.

The naturall man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſſe unto him: neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.

Licenſed and entered according to Order.

LONDON,

Printed by *Tho. Paine*, living in Red-croſſe-Street in Gold-Smiths Alley, over againſt the Suger loafe. 1646.

Some mistaken Scriptures sincerely explained, in an Answer to one infected with *some Pelagian Errours.*

WHereas you say that some Scriptures seeme too hold forth unto you that a man hath free-will, I desire you for your better information to take notice of these two Propositions.

1. *Propos.* We do not simply deny that a man hath any freedome of will: but only do hold that no naturall man, nor any man of himself, hath a sufficient power, or freedom of will, unto the choosing of that way, which is good and right, and acceptable in the sight of God. To the choosing of evill wayes; wee grant that every naturall man hath freedome enough, if so be this may be termed by so good a name as Freedome. Consequently, we doe not hold that any man is compelled or enforced by violence to choose the evill, or to refuse the good: but that through the corruption of nature man unrenewed doth willingly and wilfully refuse the good way, and choose the evill. And whereas the unregenerate person can do no otherwise, this is not the fruit of any force or compulsion laid upon him but only of the obstinate wickednesse, or wicked obstinacy of his own corrupted and depraved will. The truth hereof appeares by these Scriptures, *Gen.* 8.21. *Eccles.* 9.3. *Jerem.* 17. 9. *Matth* 15.19. *Rom.* 3. 9, 10, 11, &c. *Rom.* 8. 6.7, 8. *James* 1. 13 14, 15. *Joh.* 8. 44.

2. *Propos.* The elect do indeed with untained willingnesse obey the Gospell of Jesus Christ, and choose the Lord to be their God: but this they do when they are effectually called, and not before: and this they doe, not of themselves, nor only by the well using of an ability or power given to all men; but by the speciall grace of God to them afforded, who worketh in them both to will & to do, & this according to the good pleasure of his owne will concerning them from all eternity. The trueth of this appeares in these places; *Isai.* 54. 13 compared with *Joh* 6 44, 45. 64, 65. *Ezek* 36. 26, 27. *Rom.* 8, 28, 29, 30, *Ephes.* 1, 4, 5, 11. *Philip.* 1 29. *Philip.* 2. 13. *James* 1. 18.

These *Propositions* being thus laid downe and cleared, I come now to consider those Scriptures wch you name to prove that a man hath free will or free choice; *viz. Deut.* 30. 19 *Josh.* 24. 15. 22. *Judg.* 10. 14. *Isaiah* 65. 12. and 66. 3. 1 *King.* 3. 5–11. *Psal.* 119. 30. *Luk.* 10. 42.

Deut. 30. 19 *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life,* &c.

This place shewes what was the duty of the *Israelites* to doe: but doth not proove that they had any abillity of themselves to doe it; or that God gives any such abillity to all men. Compare this place with 2 *Cor.* 3. 5. and *Deut.* 29. 4.

Josh. 24. 15. *And if it seeme evill unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve,* &c.

Here I somewhat question what part of the verse you would have especially to be opened: whether this: *Choose you this day whom you will serve,* &c. Or this; *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* The first implyes that Idolaters doe freely choose those Idolls, with which they commit spirituall whoredome. Freely, that is to say, not being enforced or compelled thereunto by any violence constraining them to this motion of their will. This is not denyed, but acknowledged and held by us, as you may see in the first proposition. The last part of the verse holds forth the free and constant resolution of the Saints to serve the Lord. This also is taught in my second proposition But there you must likewise remember, that this is the fruit of the speciall grace of God afforded to the Elect, who worketh in them both to will and to doe; *Philip.* 2. 13. And this worke is wrought by the infinite power of God. *Ephes.* 1. 19. and 3. 20.

Josh. 24. 22. *Yee are witnesses against your selves, that you have Chosen you the Lord, to serve him.*

This is meant directly and only of that which went before in *vers.* 21. *The people said unto Joshua, Nay, but We will serve the Lord.* They that were Israelites indeed, did in truth and sincerity make this promise and choice; but this they did not of themselves, but through the speciall grace of God, as hath been already proved.

Judg. 10. 14. *Goe and cry unto the Gods which yee have chosen.*

Isaiah 65. 12. *When I speake, yee did not heare, but did evill before mine eyes, and did chuse that wherein I delighted not.*

Isaiah 66. 3. *They have chosen their own wayes, and their soule delighteth in their abominations.*

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Theſe three places imply no more then what we cleerly hold; as you may ſee in my firſt propoſition.

1 King 3. 5. 6. 9. 10. *God ſaid, aske what I ſhall give thee. And Solomon ſaid, Give thy ſervant an underſtanding heart,* &c. *And the ſpeech pleaſed the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.*

This place ſeemes to you to import, that *Solomon* did freely make choice to aske of God underſtanding to heare judgement. This we deny not. But conſider alſo that this choice and petition was the fruit of the wiſedome and grace which God had already given him. Compare this place with *Zechar.* 12. 10. *I will poure upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace, and of ſupplications.* See alſo *Rom.* 8. 26.

Pſal. 119. 30. *I have choſen the way of truth.*

Luke 10. 42. *Mary hath choſen that good part.*

True, but it was the ſpeciall grace of God; the ſpeciall, gracious and powerfull worke of Gods ſpirit, which cauſed *David* and *Mary* to make that good choice: as alſo hath been already prooved. And thus have I done with your firſt catalogue of texts of Scripture.

Your ſecond catalogue containes certaine places, in which (as you conceive) the promiſes of God doe depend upon our doing of his commands. Hereto I anſwer firſt more generally.

The Scripture promiſeth eternall life to thoſe that obey the Goſpel of Chriſt: *Heb.* 5. 9 & threatens eternall deſtruction to the diſobedient, *Jo.* 3. 36. 2 *Theſ.* 1. 8. This we acknowledge, and thus we teach. But conſider that which I have alſo already proved, that the elect of God performe this obedience through Gods ſpeciall Grace; and that this ſpeciall grace is freely given to them of God according to his own purpoſe concerning them from all eternitie; and that God hath freely promiſed this grace to his elect. All this appeares by places of Scripture already aleadged for the confirmation of my ſecond propoſition.

Thus I deſcend to conſider more particularly the places of Scripture that you here preſent unto me. *viz. Levit.* 26. 3. and *Iſaiah* 1. 19. *Prov.* 1 23. *Jer.* 7. 13. *Mat.* 19. 17. *Mat.* 11. 28. *Mat.* 11. 21. *Mat.* 23. 37. *Luke* 16. 16. *Ier.* 3. 22.

Levit. 26. 3. &c. *If ye walke in my ſtatutes, and keepe my commandements, and doe them, then I will give you,* &c.

Here we muſt remember; 1. That ſince *Adams* fall no meere man either

either did or could keep Gods commandements, & do them according to the rigor and strictnesse of the Law. *Eccles.* 7. 20. 2. That whereas the Elect among the *Israelites* did truly beleeve in the promised Messiah, and did shew the truth of their faith by the sincerity of their obedience to Gods revealed will in every thing; this was the fruit of Gods speciall grace to them afforded. *Numb.* 14 24. *Psal.* 119 32. 36. These cleare truths may also free you from your doubts that seeme to arise from the next place by you mentioned, *viz. Isaiah.* 1. 19.

Prov. 1. 23. *Turne you at my reproofe, behold, I will poure out my spirit unto you, I will make knowne my words unto you.*

The former part of this verse is an exhortation. It is the conceit of some that such exhortations doe alwayes imply that the persons exhorted have a sufficient ability in them to obey the exhortation directed unto them. But this conceit is a meere presumption, not only without ground, but also against the Scripture, as appeares in *Iohn* 6. 65. and other places. It is demanded, why then are such exhortations used? I answer, 1. To mind the persons exhorted of their duty, and to leave them the more inexcusable in their willfull disobedience. 2. Because the Lord is pleased to worke powerfully upon the Elect by such exhortations

The latter part of this verse containes a promise. You (as it seemes) conceive the promise to be here made only unto those that obey the exhortation afore going. Be it so. Only remember then, that they which obey the exhortation, doe obey the same through Gods speciall grace; and that the promise serves to assure them of the continuance and increase of grace.

Jer. 7. 13. *And now because ye have done all these workes, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but you answered not.*

If you consider this verse only, and read no further, it only holds forth the goodnesse and patience of God, in admonishing and exhorting the stubborne Jewes; and their willfull and obstinate disobedience to Gods word. If ye read the verses following also, this Scripture minds you that the disobedience and obstinacy of the Iewes was the cause of their distruction. All these things we readily acknowledge neither doe they make any thing at all against us.

Mat. 19. 17. *If thou wilt enter into life, keepe the commandements.*

Here you must consider to whom our Saviour spake this, *viz.*

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one that sought to establish his owne righteousnesse, and to get Heaven by his own doing of the good works wch the Law required; who accordingly had propounded this question? *What good thing shall I doe that I may have eternall life?* The meaning of our Saviours answer is this; If thou wilt thinke to get eternall life this way thou must keep the commandements; that is, thou must be found a person not any way guilty of any transgression against Gods commandements. This was a thing of meete and utter impossibillity, and our Saviours scope in returning to him this answer, was to discover unto him the vanity and madnesse of his proud and foolish imagination. Thus this place rightly understood hath not in it the least shew of opposition against our doctrine.

Mat. 11. 28. *Come unto me all yee that labour, and are heavie laden, and I will give you rest.*

Here Christ promiseth to give rest, not to all Persons whatsoever, but only to those labouring and heavie laden ones which come to him, namely by a true faith in him. This maketh nothing against us, it still remaining true that they, and they only, doe thus come unto Christ, in whose hearts God worketh lively faith. And this God worketh in his Elect, and only in them.

Mat. 11. 21. *Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty workes which were done in you, had beene done in Tire and Sidon,* &c.

The manifest scope of our Saviour in this place, is to shew the open inexcusablenesse of the impenitency and unbelieve of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The last words of the verse, from which your doubt ariseth, may be understood to be a figurative speech, like unto that in *Luke* 19. 40. *If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* Otherwise the words may be thus rendered, *They had possibly repented; or, They would possibly have repented.* This translation would be found well to agree to the signification of the potentiall particle which is here used in the Greeke. And then this will be the true and easie interpretation of this passage: *viz. A man would thinke they should have repented.* Beyond this, this place must not be stretched. For no interpretation must be given of any place of Scripture, which shall indeed make it to contradict the Scripture it selfe in other places.

Mat. 23. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a Hen gathereth her chickins under her wings and yee would not.*

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The meaning is this; How often have I graciouſly afforded unto the people of Jeruſalem excellent meanes of ſalvation? but the ſtubborne people of Jeruſalem have wilfully refuſed to accept of thoſe meanes of ſalvation, and to profit by the ſame. This is all that this place doth import: and this maketh nothing at all againſt us.

Luke 16. 16, *The law and the Prophets were untill Iohn: ſince that time the kingdome of God is preached and every man*, &c.

The words in this verſe which you would have to be opened are thus commonly rendered: *The kingdome of God is preached, and every man preſſeth into it.* Suppoſe this tranſlation to be right and the meaning to be the ſame that our common expoſitors have held forth in this enſuing interpretation; *Every man*, that is to ſay, many men or every order and degree of men *preſſeth into it*; that is, with willingnes and forwardneſſe receiveth the doctrine of the kingdome; and ſo entreth into the kingdome of God. Suppoſe I ſay that this were indeed the meaning of this place; yet it would be found to make nothing at all againſt us. For ſtill it will remaine true, that the Elect doe this through Gods ſpeciall grace. But the truth is, that this interpretation doth not reach our Saviours meaning in this place. The words ſhould thus be rendered; *every man offereth violence unto it.* The meaning is this; *every man*; that is, the whole world of ungodly men. *Offereth violence unto it*, that is, makes a violent oppoſition againſt the kingdome of God and the preaching thereof. See *Mat.* 11. 12, compared with *verſ.* 16, 17, 18. &c.

Jer. 3. 22. *Returne yee backſliding children*, &c. In this verſe is contained.

1. An exhortation. *Returne yee backſliding children*

2. A promiſe. *I will heale your backſlidings.* This promiſe you underſtand to belong only unto thoſe that obey the aforeſaid exhortation. Even ſo this maketh nothing againſt us, but perfectly agreeth with our doctrine. But let me here mind you that this promiſe may be underſtood not only to be a promiſe of pardon to them that repent, but alſo a promiſe of the gift of repentance to the Elect. See *Jer.* 31. 33. 34. and *Acts* 5. 31. The particle *and* here inſerted, ſeemes to make againſt this. But this need not trouble us, ſith it is only a ſupplement or addition of the tranſlators, and is not in the text.

3. A profeſſion of repentance and faith. *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* You muſt underſtand this to be the ſpeech of the Elect endued with Gods ſpeciall grace. See *Jer.* 31. 18, 19.

Thus according to your requeſt, according to the abilitie which God hath given me, I have opened the Scriptures that you have mentioned. The Lord open your underſtanding, that you may diſcerne the truth and ackowledge the ſame to the glory of God.

FINIS.